

HOW TO DECIDE ABOUT HAVING SEX

Use: Future Development

If you aren't already, you will soon be making choices about sex and sexual activity. It will be one of the most important decisions of your life. Here are some things you can do to help you make a good decision:

- Get good information from people you trust.
- Talk to people about your feelings, especially your parents and family.
- Understand all the consequences – physical as well as emotional.
- Think about what you want out of life.
- Think about your values and who you are.
- Don't let anybody rush you into something you aren't ready for. It's YOUR decision!

HOW TO MAKE YOUR DECISION STICK

Once you've made the choice, how do you stick to your limits? Here are some suggestions for staying in control when you're under pressure:

- Know beforehand what you do and don't want to do.
- Stop things when you start to feel uncomfortable. Never push someone else to do anything they don't feel comfortable with.
- Clearly state your feelings.
- Point out the consequences.
- Suggest something else to do.

Writing Assignments

1. Make an inventory of your attitudes and beliefs about sex. Select two that you feel most strong about and write a paragraph defending each one. What is the best choice or decision about sex you ever made? What was so good about it?
2. Imagine that someday you will have a child. Write a letter of advice for that child to open when he or she reaches the age you are right now. Tell the child how you feel about sexually activity during the middle school years, and the kinds of choices you hope he or she will make at this age.
3. Write about someone you know who has become sexually active. How did it happen? How did it make you feel? Did you change anything or make any decisions based on that experience? What did you learn from it?
4. How do you set your own limits about sex? How do you go about deciding what you personally feel comfortable with? When do you know you've set the limit properly? What role do your parents or other adults play in your decisions about sex?
5. How is sex portrayed on television and in the movies? Is it accurate? Is it helpful to you? Does it influence you in any way? How does it affect you? What do you think about it? How would you change it?
6. Write an imaginary dialogue between you and another person (your boyfriend or girlfriend, for instances) in which you resist having sex. Explain your limits to this person, and suggest something you'd rather do instead.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. List as many good reasons as possible for not having sex at this age.
2. Imagine that you are on a date and your boyfriend or girlfriend is trying to pressure you into having sex. What are some of the things he or she might say (make a list)? What are some good ways for you to respond to these "lines"?
3. Imagine that someone you really like wants to have sex with you, but you don't feel ready for it. Brainstorm some ways to say "no" without jeopardizing your relationship. Try role-playing this situation with both girls and boys in the role of the person saying "no".
4. Have the group list as many sexually transmitted diseases as they can think of. Then break the group into smaller groups and have them research each of these diseases and present their findings to the

full group. Their presentations should include a) how do you get it, b) how do you know you have it, c) what does it do to you, d) how do you treat it, e) how curable is it?